



## Assessment of the Level of Tourism Development and Its Challenges in Nasarawa State, Nigeria

<sup>1</sup>Muazu Abdulganiyu & <sup>2</sup>D.G. Shenpam

<sup>1&2</sup>Department of Hospitality and Tourism Management, Federal University Wukari

Corresponding Author: [shenpamgodwin@yahoo.com](mailto:shenpamgodwin@yahoo.com)

### Abstract

This research was carried out to assess the level of tourism development and challenges in Nasarawa State. The study adopted a mixed-method approach, including surveys, interviews, observations, and document analysis to gather significant data and uses descriptive analysis method to analyzed the gathered data. A total of 270 respondents were carefully selected from concern stakeholders including traditional chiefs, manager of tourism sites, staff members from government tourism board and community members in and around the tourism sites. The result revealed that all of the tourism sites were not fully developed. Only few (5) were partially developed, while the remaining 7 sites were not developed in any form. Furthermore, the results revealed lack of funding (80%) as a major challenge against proper tourism development. Other challenges include; poor community participation, neglects of tourism sites among others were also sighted. The study therefore recommends proper funding to be channeled to develop the infrastructures and amenities in the sites and involvement of community in the management of the sites to achieved its full tourism potential.

**Keywords:** *Tourism, Development, Resources, Potentials and Nasarawa State*

## Introduction

Tourism developments with its accruing benefits also possess numerous environmental, social, economic, cultural, and political impacts across all sector of nation's economy. Nigeria as a nation is endowed with various tourist attractions of which its proper development could serve as alternative

revenue generator to the troubling oil sector. Every State in Nigeria has one type of tourism potential or the other. Tourism has therefore become a key strategy which can be used by government and private investors to generate economic, social, and environmental benefits to communities while foster community development and alleviate poverty (Tijjani, 2005).

The existence of tourism potentials has given rise to the development of tourist sites to cater for the needs of tourists during their periods of visitation. According to c cited in Nyong & Inyang (2018), “tourism sites comprise those basic amenities such as visitors’ friendly attractions, cultural heritage, colourful fairs, and festivities often provided to enhance a smooth operation and delivery of tourist needs”.

Nigeria efforts to develop and promote tourism have gained momentum in recent years, with various regions showcasing their unique attractions. Nasarawa State has also emerged as a promising destination with abundant tourism site which are yet to be fully tapped. From natural wonders to cultural landmarks, Nasarawa State brags about scenic views, such as undulating hills, picturesque cascades, and verdant forests, creating it a perfect spot for nature-based tourism and open-air lovers. Notably, Nasarawa State has abundant cultural diversity, with multiple ethnic groups living together harmoniously and each adding their own unique traditions, arts, and crafts.

With all these immense tourism potentials, Nasarawa State still lags behind other States in the country in terms of development, investments and promotion of her tourism sites and attractions thereby failing to harness the positive impacts that come with proper development of tourism sites, like employment and job creation,

revenue generation, beautiful and attractive sceneries as well as infrastructural development among others. Hence, the need for this research was to identify and assess the level of development as well as the challenges militating against development of tourism sites in Nasarawa State. The result of this research could act as a roadmap for government officials, travel industry stakeholders, and societies to collaborate in encouraging a lively and sustainable tourism sector in Nasarawa State.

## Statement of the Problem

The importance of tourism and its development to a nation cannot be overemphasised because of their unique roles in social, cultural, and economic development (Tijani & Orga, 2019). Nasarawa State, like any other States in Nigeria is privileged to be endowed with a lot of tourism resources, which makes the State to possess unlimited potentials for social, cultural and economic development. However, the State is among the last set of States created in 1996 which makes it still relatively new and lacking in many aspects of development including tourism.

The most important problem is that most of these resources are partially or not fully developed. Hence, this cannot lead to any meaningful contribution to the development of the state in particular and the nation at large. Furthermore, most of these tourism potentials lack proper categorisation in terms of level of development without

which it will be difficult to know which of the sites are well develop, partially developed or not developed at all. Knowing the level of these sites developments would guide government and private investors on which of them to invest and channel funding resources to. Accordingly, another angle of the problem comes from not understanding the challenges that militate against the proper development of these tourism Sites. By understanding the nature of these challenges proper means and ways to overcome them could be proposed. The pertinent questions therefore include:

- i. Are tourism resources in Nasarawa State developed?
- ii. What are their current levels of development?

This research therefore intent to profile answers to these questions.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The following objectives are put forward:

- i. Assess the current level of tourism development in Nasarawa State
- ii. Assess the challenges affecting the development of tourism resources in Nasarawa State

### **Study Area**

The study area of this research is Nasarawa State. The state is located at Longitudes 8°3'13"N and Latitudes 8°18'31"E. Nasarawa State boast of an extensive array of tourism assets, encompassing natural landscapes, cultural heritage sites, and historical attractions. Known for its rich

cultural traditions, lush forests, picturesque mountains, and historical landmarks, Nasarawa State provides an ideal location for investigating the complexities of tourism sites resources.

Located in north-central geopolitical zone of Nigeria, Nasarawa State was created in 1996 out of neighbouring Plateau state. The state known as the 'Home of Solid Minerals' has 13 local governments and these are Awe, Akwanga, Doma, Karu, Keana, Keffi, Kokona, Lafia, Nasarawa, N/Eggon, Obi, Toto, and Wamba. Nasarawa State was one of the six states created in 1996 by the military regime of late General Sani Abacha. The State was carved out of the old Plateau State and ever since it was created, the state has grown to become one of the top tourist states with its magnificently beautiful landscapes and spectacular highlands.

Nasarawa has a diverse range of indigenous ethnic groups according to 2006 census, the state has a population of a little less than 2 million (1,869,377) but a projected population of 2,886,000 people in 2022 according to the National Population Commission (NPC, 2023). A very hospitable and culturally rich people, Nassarawa is composed of different ethnic groups each with its own distinct local dialect but Hausa is common among the people. They all have a common history and share similar social and cultural ideologies. Ethnic groups in Nasarawa State include Afo, Agatu, Akye, Alago, Bassa, Egbira, Eggon, Kuteb, Gade, Gbagyi,

Gwandara, Hausa, Jukun, Kanuri, Mada, Ninzom, Arum, Rindre, Yeskwa and Tiv.

Farming is the main occupation of the people of the state and crops produced include cassava, yam, rice, maize, guinea corn, beans, soya beans, acha and millet. The state is blessed with precious mineral resources like columbite, coal and aquamarine.

Nasarawa State has a total land area of 27,137.8sqkm and it shares borders in the west by the Federal Capital Territory Abuja, in north by Kaduna State, in south by Benue and Kogi State, and in the east by Plateau and Taraba States. Nasarawa's main economic activity is agriculture; cash crops such as yam, cassava and egusi (melon) are produced in

large quantities. The production of minerals such as salt is also another major economic activity in the state; Nasarawa produces a large proportion of the salt consumed in the country.

Nasarawa State lies within the guinea Savannah region and has tropical climate with moderate rainfall (annual mean rainfall of 1311:75cm). The state is made up of plain lands and hills measuring up to 300ft above the sea level at some points. Nasarawa has some of the most beautiful sites and landscapes in the country and these include beautiful hills, striking and unique natural lakes etc (see Figure 1 and 2 below).

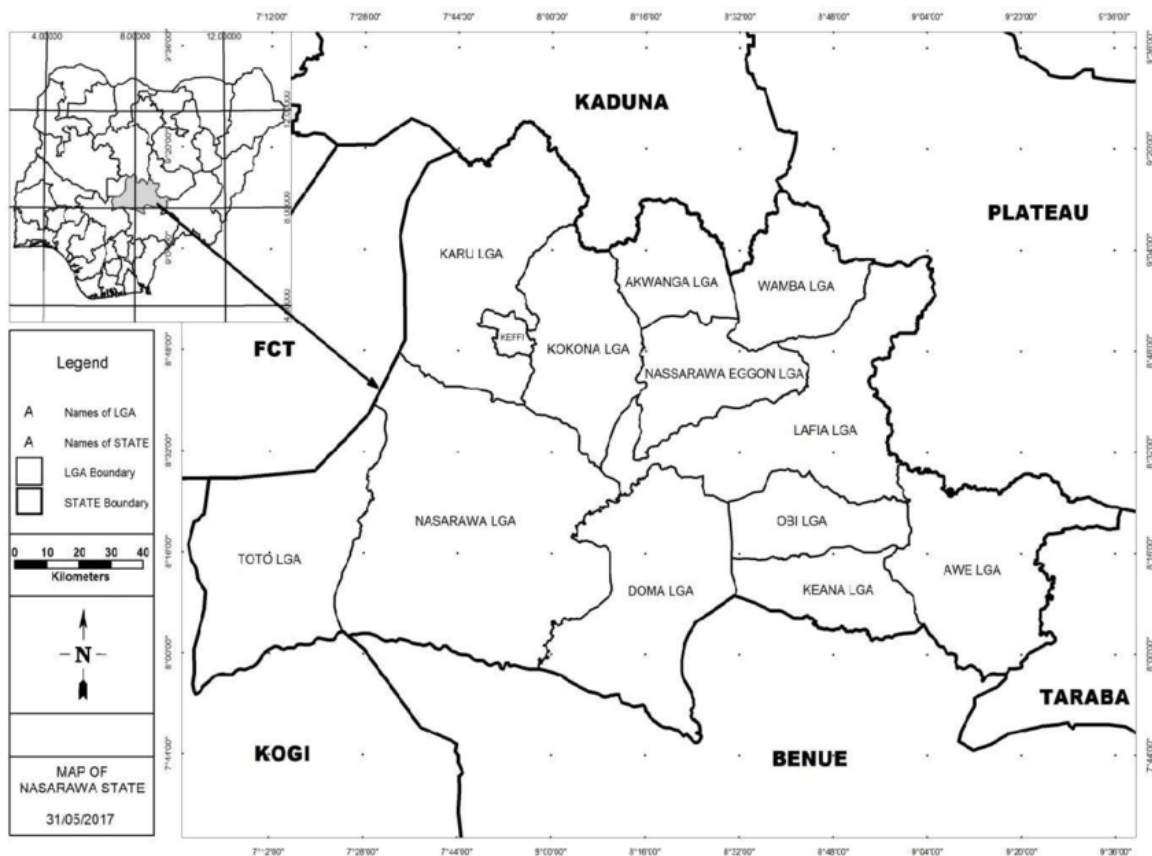


Figure1. Map of Naarawa State showing all the local government areas

Source: Adapted from Victor, et al, (2018)

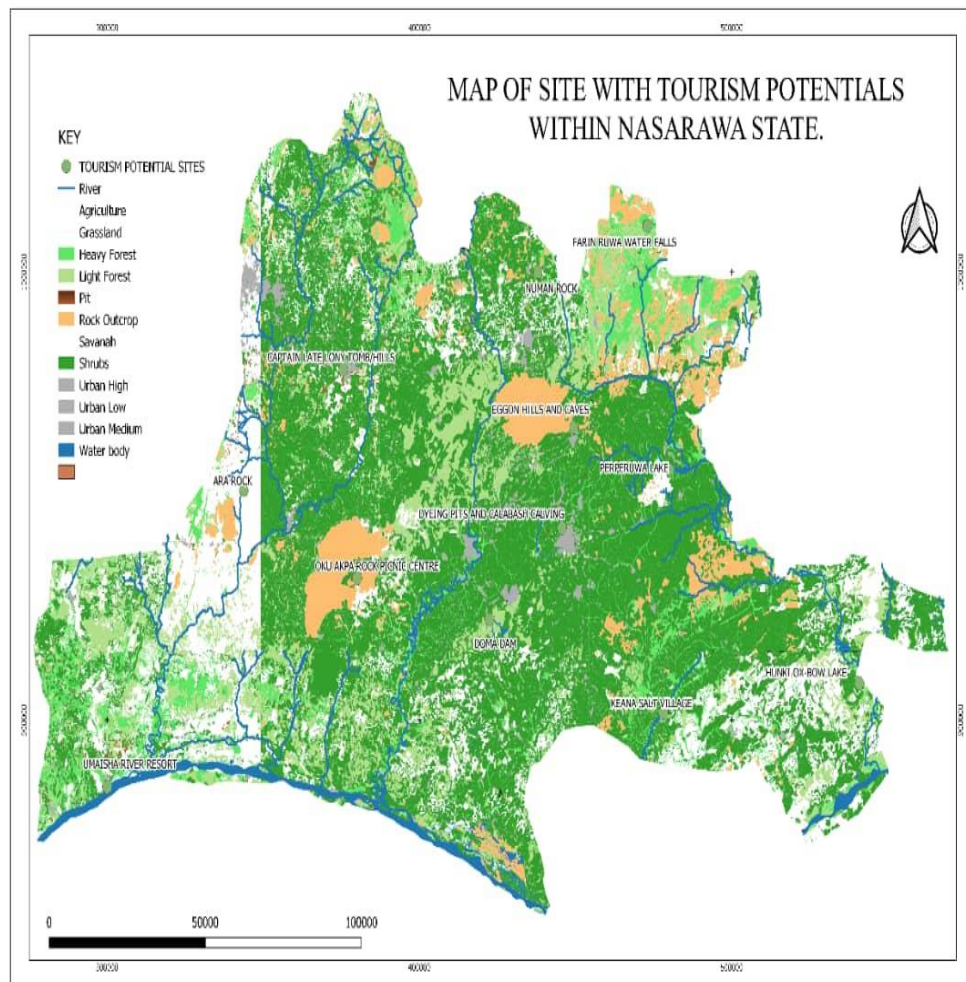


Figure 2. Map of Nasarawa State showing Tourism Potentials.

Source: Field work in collaboration with NAGIS, 2024

## Literature Review

The tourism industry is one of the biggest and largest industry in the world that is fast growing and it's a business institution that gives a place to people when they want to relax or are on holiday. However, tourism is originally seen as sightseeing and for relaxation, with tourism effects, it is basically a

way of bringing people together from different parts of the world, by mutual interactions. Apart from sightseeing and interactions, tourism also influences wealth creations, and it is a means of modifying values and behaviors. With the effects of behavior and values modification, it is a way of enhancing social relationship among the

visitors and the locals, this influence gives an impact on societal change (UNWTO, 2016).

The tourism industry plays a key role in today's world economy by contributing greatly to social transformation and the global economy improvement. Because of its great impact and influence, tourism has become income and wealth creation for many countries like Dubai, France, America, and Hong Kong (Mills, 1983). According to UNWTO, the number of international overnight tourists visiting Dubai from 2010 to 2015 grows from 10.16 million to 12.18 million. Most countries like Dubai focus on tourism because of the fast means of generating income to the economy, the government are very involved as well as the locals to create more fascinating destinations so that tourist can come and visit. The tourism industry has now become a major competitor to the oil sector in this country. Since the 1950s, international tourism has been growing rapidly because of high income, good tourist destination, good transport networks, and great leisure time. According to UNWTO (2016) international tourism receipts grew by 3.16% in year 2015 and international arrival grew by 4.4% increase for four straight years. International tourism grew more than other sectors like merchandise trade. With her fast growth, tourism shares in worlds export rise to 75% increase in 2015 which led to the total international tourism to \$1.4 trillion. Remuneration gathered from international tourism on food, drinks, hotel accommodation, shopping, entertainment,

and other services generate \$1,232 billion. It was €1.110 billion in 2015, and a 3.6% increase in exchange rate fluctuations. With this, tourism industry is projected to grow faster and the significance of socio-cultural, economic, and environmental benefits will generate more income.

Tourism industries in Nigeria dates back to the medieval ages without government intervention witnessed visitors from far and near coming to observe cultural festival, dances, and ceremonies etc. (Dekadt, 2015). Nigeria is the most populated country in African continent with one of the fastest growing economies. Nigeria tourism dwells joy and entertainment for every class because of large population and different Mother Nature endowment that local could satisfy every one's appetite. The contribution of tourism industry in Nigeria with the government intervention cannot be over emphasized. In all over the world, tourism is a money yielding business and is now becoming part of revenue generating sector for the economy. It provides jobs for the residents, thereby increasing the standard of living.

Tourism has now become a virtual part of the government agenda as more and more hospitality industries spring up in all cities providing relaxation spots to tourists and revenue to the government. Tourists are attracted to Nigeria cultural diversity, scenery, and festivals each state of the Federation has to offer. It is observed that in 2011 alone, more than 2 million tourist visited Nigeria, the

different international church crusades and conferences coupled with foreign investors on business tourism make the bulk of the tourists and spent the equivalent of \$3.7 million US Dollars and this is expected to rise by 10% increase year by year (Dekadt, 2015).

Considering the vast area of tourist attractions in the country and nonchalant or I don't care attitude of the government sustenance of this "black gold" will be a mirage unless concerted effort be made to promote and protect the industry. No matter the endowment of natural resources without the political will of the government and successive governments in the future are needed to sustain and improve the tempo already achieved. In the tourism industry, tourists are the propelling force that should be well taken care of to enable the spread of the industry.

### **Tourism Site Development**

According to Ehizuelen (1996), there are various views of development based on discipline. For instance, political scientists regard development as freedom from political rule (self-rule). They focus their attention on the problems of nation building as modernization occurs. Economists view development as economic growth i.e., rapid, and sustainable rise in real output per-head and the attendant shift in technological, economic, and demographic characteristics, particularly of the developing countries. On the other hand, Sociologists and Social Anthropologists see development in terms of the process of differentiation that characterized modern societies. In general,

Ehizuelen (1996), sees development as material advancement, modernization, industrialization, scientific and technological advancement, the emergence of nuclear energy, the electronic and biological revolution and new knowledge about man and the universe among others.

According to Agbonlahor & Ukhnochor (2006), based on the above definitions, development can be seen as a process through which a society's political, social, and cultural institutions are transformed to improve the living standard and life chances of the people within that society. Wall & Alister (2006), therefore document that tourism site development gives rise to different benefits and costs in different areas. Many of these differences are attributable to variations in the economic structures of destination areas, the institutional framework surrounding tourist site development and their geographical locations. Adebayo & Jegede (2014) opined that tourism site development in any nation or country has environmental, social, economic, cultural, and political impacts affecting all other aspects or sectors of the nation. Ekechukwu (2010) concluded that tourism site development creates jobs at various levels that are essential to the growth of the rural and national economy. He also stated that tourism site development is seen as the best possible alternative strategy which will be used for promoting many local areas. It is believed that with tourism site development, there will be a tendency for environmental sustainability,

more job opportunities, expansion in both public and private investment, provision of infrastructural facilities and economic improvement. The development of tourism site in the rural areas is really a great achievement to the local people, in terms of employment opportunity and created avenue for earning additional income. However, the use of local materials and labor in local production is a good illustration of potential for small-scale development of sustainable tourism sites

Wall & Alister (2006) again opined that there is no doubt that many nations have turned out to be tapping from the tremendous growth in tourism business. Many nations have been taking steps to partake in the sharing of the ever-increasing global tourism market. More so, many developing countries have also joined the race. Foreign exchange earnings, employment opportunity, economic diversification, economic growth, broader economic and social development policy, and other factors are the fundamental justification for the establishment and development of tourism sites.

## **Method of Data Collection**

Surveys method of data collection was undertaken to gather quantitative data from stakeholders involved in the study. The surveys employed a mixture of closed-ended questions to facilitate quantitative analysis. Semi-structured interviews were also conducted with key stakeholders. These

interviews permit an in-depth exploration of issues pertaining to tourism site, development and challenges of development. Interviews were recorded, transcribed, and scrutinized for qualitative insights.

Field observations were adopted to have a firsthand understanding of various tourism sites in study area to assess the level of their development. Observations were centered on infrastructure, environmental conservation efforts, visitor behavior, and the overall condition of the sites. Document Analysis was used to analyze existing documents, reports, policies, and publications related to tourism sites development in Nasarawa State. This provides historical context, policy insights, and supplementary data for the study. Secondary Data in form of statistical data and reports from relevant government agencies, tourism boards, and research institutions were gathered and analyzed to provide additional context and support quantitative findings.

The amalgamation of these data collection methodologies enabled a comprehensive analysis and understanding of the tourism site resources and its nature or level of development as well as challenges to development in the study area. The incorporation of both quantitative and qualitative data allowed for a multi-faceted analysis, ensuring that the research findings are robust and enlightening.

## **Results and Discussion**



### Level of Development of Tourism Sites in Nasarawa State

Objective one of this research was to determine the level of development of the identified tourism sites in the study area. Three level of development indicator were used: Those sites that were well developed with hospitality and tourism facilities and infrastructure like connecting good road, accommodations like hotels, recoded number of tourist visits as well as generation of revenue from tourist visits. Those that were partially developed having few of the above listed indicators and those that were not developed at all. These were sites with no

additional facilities, infrastructures or amenities. No recorded tourist visits and or revenue generated from them.

According to data presented in table 1, it was found that none of the identified tourism sites were well develop, six (6) of them were partially developed including Farin Ruwa Waterfall, Late Captain Malony Hills/Tom, Dyeing Pits and Calabash Carving, Ruwamasha River Resort, Doma Dam as well as Keana Salt Village. Those that did not have any form of development were Numan Rock, Perperuwa Late, Eggon Hills and Caves, Ara Rock, Uku Apka Rock as well as Hunki Ox-Bow Late.

Table 1. Tourism Sites level of development

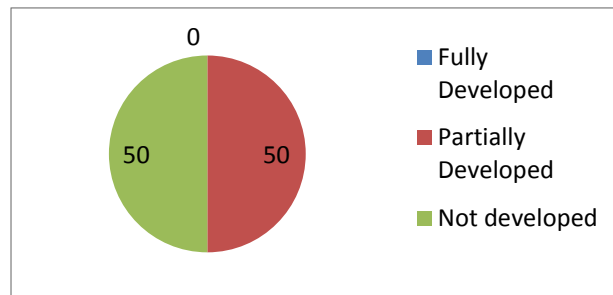
SN	Tourism Sites	Level of tourism site development		
		developed	Partially developed	Not developed
1	Numan Rock			
2	Farin Ruwa Waterfalls			
3	Late Captain Malony Tomb/Hills			
4	Perperuwa Lake			
5	Dyeing Pits and Calabash Calving			
6	Eggon Hills and Caves			
7	Ara Rock			
8	Oku Apka Rock Picnic Center			
9	Ruwamaisha River Resort			
10	Doma Dam			
11	Keana Salt Village			
12	Hunki Ox-Bow Lake			

**Source:** Field work, 2023

Further analysis as presented in figure 3 revealed that 50 percent of the tourism sites were only partially develop, while another 50 percent were not developed in any form at all and in circumvent, implies that 100

percent of the tourism sites in the study area were yet to be fully develop.

Figure 3. Level of tourism development by percentage



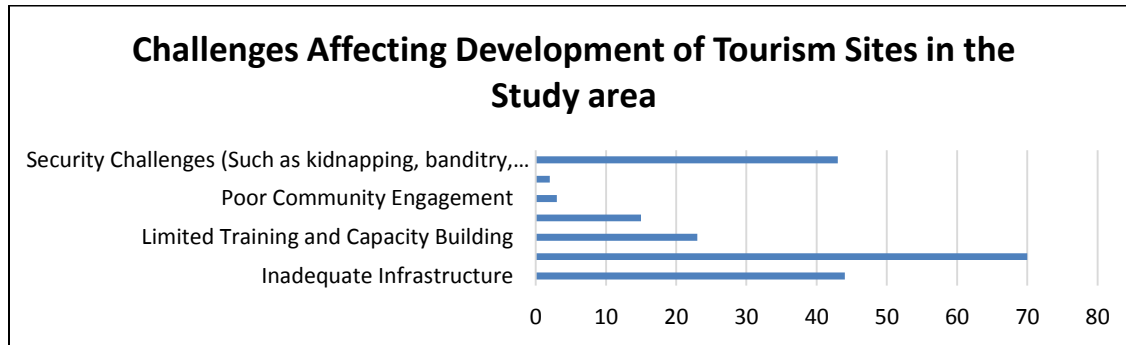
**Source:** Filed work, 2023

### Challenges against Tourism Sites Development in the Study Area

There were many challenges that militate against proper development of the tourism sites in the study area as identified by the stakeholders/respondents. Accordingly, the most prevalent difficulty as presented in figure 4 was the lack of funds, with 70.2% of respondents identifying financial limits as a critical hurdle. Insufficient infrastructure, including roads, facilities, and utilities was also identified as

well as insecurity leading to kidnaping, robbery and stealing etc. representing about 43% also identified as major challenges. Limited training and capacity building was also identified as another challenge with 25% of respondents margin. Furthermore, neglect of cultural heritage was identified as another challenge with 15% of respondent's margin. Poor community interaction was identified by the respondents as another challenge though with a smaller 4.5% margin, and finally environmental contamination was the least of the

challenges identified with only 1.5% respondent's margin.



Figures 4: Main Challenges Affecting Tourism Site Development.

Source: Field work, 2023

## Discussion

From data presented in this study, it was revealed that there were a total of 12 significant tourism sites in the study area. These sites include Numan Rock, located in Akwanga local government area (LGA). Farin Ruwa Waterfall located in Wamba LGA. Late Captain Malony Tomb/Hills, located in Keffi LGA. Perperuwa Lake, Located in Lafia. Dyeing Pits and Calabash Calving, located in Lafia. Eggon Hills and Caves located in Nasarawa Eggon LGA. Ara Rock, located in Nasarawa LGA. Oku Apka Rock Picnic Center, located also in Nasarawa LGA. Umaisha River Resort, located in Toto LGA. Doma Dam, located in Doma LGA. Keana Salt Village, located in Keana LGA, and last but not the least, Hunki Ox-Bow Lake, located in Awe LGA. With this result, it means that Nasarawa State could boast of numerous tourism sites and at least each LGA in the state could boast of at least a tourism site. This tourism sites signifies huge tourism

potentials in the state that could be developed into an attractive and viable tourism industry to the state, but however, these attractions were partially or not fully developed.

Studies revealed that none of the identified tourism sites were well develop, six (6) of them were partially develop including Farin Ruwa Waterfall, Late Captain Malony Hills/Tom, Dyeing Pits and Calabash Carving, Ruwamasha River Resort, Doma Dam as well as Keana Salt Village. Those that did not have any form of development were Numan Rock, Perperuwa Lake, Eggon Hills and Caves, Ara Rock, Uku Apka Rock as well as Hunki Ox-Bow Lake. Again, this finding agrees with Wall & Alister (2006) that tourism sites in most developing countries are not developed to their full potentials. These findings revealed that a lot still needs to be done in terms of development of these tourism sites to be able to harness their full benefits.

To understand challenges facing proper development of these tourism sites in the study area, finding from the study revealed that lack of funds, with 70.2% of respondents was number one challenge. Insufficient infrastructure, including roads, facilities, and utilities and insecurity leading to kidnaping, robbery and stealing etc. representing about 43% were also major challenges. It was further revealed that limited training and capacity building was another challenge with 25% of respondents margin. Neglect of cultural heritage was another challenge with 15% of respondent's margin. Poor community interaction was another challenge though with a smaller 4.5% margin, and finally environmental contamination like pollution was found to be the least of the challenges with only 1.5% respondent's margin. This finding is in agreement with the work of Timothy & Boyd, (2003) that identified funding as a major obstacle to tourism site development in southern American countries. Also, the work of García-Sánchez (2015) on challenges of tourism sites resource development in Spain identified funding, capacity building and inadequate community engagement as major obstacle thereby agreeing with the findings from this research.

The implication of these findings means that until these challenges are tackled, tourism sites in the study area might still remain in their state of underdevelopment without achieving it full potentials of revenue

generation, job creation and infrastructure among others.

## Conclusion

This study therefore conclude that though there are many notable tourism sites resources available in the study area, they are yet to be develop into functional and active tourism sites that could bring both direct and indirect benefits to the inhabitants of the area and government alike.

## Recommendations

Based on the above conclusion, the following recommendations were therefore put forward:

- i. **Infrastructure Development:** The state government should emphasize infrastructure development in tourism sites. This involves upgrading road networks, infrastructure, and utilities. Adequate infrastructure is vital for providing travellers with a comfortable and safe experience.
- ii. **Funding Support:** To address the difficulty of funding, the state government should explore various funding sources, including public-private partnerships, grants, and investments from tourism-related enterprises. Adequate financial resources are crucial for tourism growth.

- iii. **T**raining and Capacity Building: Stakeholders in the tourist sector should prioritize training and capacity building for individuals and groups responsible for safeguarding cultural and historical tourism treasures. This will guarantee successful management and conservation activities.
- iv. **C**ommunity Engagement: Local communities should be actively involved in the protection and administration of cultural and historical assets. Their involvement and support are important for sustainable tourism development and growth.
- v. **E**nvironmental Conservation: Environmental conservation measures should be adopted to maintain the natural surroundings of cultural and historical assets. This involves attempts to decrease pollution and preserve the natural balance.

By implementing these guidelines, Nasarawa State can exploit its full tourism sites potential, generate economic growth, and conserve its cultural and historical legacy. Collaboration among government agencies, local communities, private sector partners,

and the tourist industry is vital for the successful implementation of these recommendations, which will lead to sustainable development of this sector of the industry in Nasarawa State of Nigeria.

## References

- Adebayo, W.O & Jegede, A.O. (2014). The Economic Impact of Tourism Development in Ile-Ife, Osun State, Nigeria. *Journal of Tourism, Hospitality and Sport*, 2, 28-33.
- Agbonlahor, J.N., and Ukhurebor, A.A. (2006), Tourism and National Development. In P.U. Okpoko (ed) (2006). Issues in Tourism Planning and Development. Nsukka: Afro-Orbis Publishing Co. Ltd.
- De Kadt, Daniel (2015) Voter Habituation in Developing Democracies: Evidence from South Africa's First Democratic Election. MIT Political Science Department Research Paper No. 2015-11, Available at SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=2599085> or <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2599085>
- Ehizuelen, J.E. (1996), Theories of Development and Under Development. Benin City, University of Benin Press.
- Ekechukwu, L.C. (2010). Pathways for harnessing the Tourism Potentials of natural and Cultural Sites and Features on the Nsukka Okigwe Cuesta. *International Journal of Research in Arts and Social Sciences*, 2, 1-11.

- Ekechukwu, L.C. (2010). Pathways for harnessing. The Tourism Potentials of Natural and Cultural Sites and Features on the Nsukka Okigwe Cuesta. *International Journal of Research in Arts and Social Sciences* 2, 1-11.
- García-Sánchez (2015)
- Mill, E.T. (2007). Stakeholders in Sustainable Tourism Development and their Roles: Applying Stakeholder Theory to Sustainable Tourism Development. *Tourism Review*, 62 (2), 6 – 13.
- Muñoz, A. D. A., & Sánchez, S. G. (2015). Destinos turísticos inteligentes. *Economía industrial*, 395, 61-69.
- Nyong, S. F & Inyang, L. O. (2018). Tourism Sites and Infrastructural development in Southern Senatorial District of cross River State, Nigeria. *International Journal of New technology and Research*, 4(3), 57-63.
- Tijani, N.O & Orga, D.Y (2019). Assessment of Challenges of Potentials of Osun Osogbo Sacred Grove among Staff of National Commission for Museum and monuments,
- Tijani, N.O. (2005). Local Community Perception of the Wildlife Conservation in Old Oyo National Park, *biological and Environmental Science Journal for the Tropic*, 2(2), 119-125.
- UNWTO (2016). Tourism Towards 2030, (2015). Retrieved from [www.mkt.unwto.org](http://www.mkt.unwto.org).
- Wall, G. and Matheison A. (2006), *Tourism: Change, Impacts, and Opportunities*; Publisher, Pearson Prentice Hall.